

Golden opportunities for treasure hunters

By Roger Boye

THAT RUSTY, twisted old car in the local junkyard may just be a gold mine of rare coins.

Or buried a few inches below the ground in your neighborhood could be old Indian head cents and buffalo nickels worth several dollars.

Searching for old coins which were lost by persons living years ago has become an increasingly popular hobby, labeled by one numismatic writer as "coin shooting."

For example, a collector recently described how he has searched under the seats of hundreds of old cars and has found coins dating in the

1800s, including silver dollars, Indian head cents, and a Barber quarter. The coins had slipped out of the pockets of the former car owners and had become wedged under the seats.

Another collector has told of finding, in one afternoon, both an 1885 and an 1886 Liberty head nickel buried a few inches below ground level in an old park. The combined retail value of the nickels in good condition is about \$90.

But "coin shooting" is not without potential hazards. Some advice for searching thru old cars:

- Always obtain permission to search. Wear gloves and old heavy clothes. Beware of bees or other in-

sects. Be prepared to look not only under the seat, but in the cracks, niches, and corners—places where the constant jarring would send the coins.

And some advice for looking for buried coins:

- Always obtain permission to search. Invest in a good metal-detecting device [they are manufactured by several companies and are advertised in numismatic periodicals] and know how to operate it. [Some devices sell for as much as \$300 and more; you might consider renting a detector for a week as a test.] Determine if your detector can distinguish between a nickel and a pull ring from a cola can. And do not leave holes in

the ground or debris scattered on the premises.

What about the best places to look? "Coin shooter" Cliff Stefens offers this advice in an article in *Coin World*:

"Hit the old parks and fairgrounds. Take the time

to locate the really old areas. Visit the local library and the historical society. . . .

"You will soon discover that a little research makes a big difference in your end results. Listen to the old-tim-

ers who frequent the parks. They still remember the old days and may provide you with your best treasure-hunting tips. It is better to spend a few hours at an old historical spot than a week at a new park."